



Photographer Wigo Worsseling is an Urban Explorer and is always hunting for faded glory; an old premises of which the exterior screams to be explored and photographed inside. Is it abandoned? Can I get in? Is it safe and without any security on guard? An entrance is found, nothing indicates the presence of people. Walls are peeled, ceilings have collapsed, glass is on the floor and the stale smell of decaying wood enters your nose. Daylight tries to seep in and creates a spectacle of shadows. You wonder what it once has looked like. The camera is set up, the hunt is on!

The term Urban Exploration which, in fact, means 'exploring and investigating development' is also called 'Urbex.'

Photographers are constantly looking for traces of history to capture these in all their faded glory.

During Wigo Worsseling's training at the School of Photography he got more and more involved in Urbex and met other Urbex photographers. The Urbex photographers from this period were pioneers and kept the scene underground as much as possible. This hard-core group of photographers enforced an important rule: Take nothing but photographs, leave nothing but footprints.

Beautiful and sensitive locations are now kept secret within this group and only shared with a select few, in order to protect them from harm. It all started as an exciting adventure when Wigo Worsseling first visited an abandoned factory 10 years ago. Now, 200 locations on, he can look back on a period in which he had the privilege to enjoy the beauty of decay.

In this book you will find a selection of his photographs taken in various European countries between 2009 and 2015.



GBP £ 24.99/USD \$ 35.00

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– Abandoned and forgotten –

Exploring Urban Secrets

EXPLORING URBAN SECRETS

Wigo Worsseling



Aerial

Wigo Worsseling



Foreword

Ever since my youth I have been fascinated by photography. Through photography I have been able to capture moments in time, which have increased in value and significance to me over the years. My photographs have become a kind of journal of experiences for me – treasured memories, which will stay with me for my entire life. When digital photography arrived, giving me the ability to edit photographs on a computer, my passion only grew. I took vocational training at the ‘Fotovakschool,’ *University of Applied Photography*, practising all forms of photography and studying all the movements within the field. Some I found interesting; some I found endlessly boring.

I first came across Urban Exploration Photography during my training. This was a world that was then quite unknown, in which only a handful of photographers were active. The term Urban Exploration is usually abbreviated to ‘Urbex’. It means ‘exploring and investigating development’, and Urbex photographers specifically seek abandoned developments. As an Urbex photographer I look for traces of the past and capture images of faded glory. There is much mystique around this type of photography and it is certainly not for everyone. Exploring locations that have been abandoned for years takes nerve – you never know what, or who, you may come across. Nor is it without danger. You have to know what you are doing if you decide, for example, to climb several floors of an old, rusted factory.

My first Urbex adventure

I had come across Urbex while browsing online in 2005; until then I had never heard of this form of photography. A few months later a friend and I went to a deserted steel factory in Belgium called Forges de Clabecq, and this was my first real introduction to Urbex.

Meticulous preparation was vital for our venture. We wanted to get into an abandoned building with forbidden access that security guards may still patrol. How could we get in unnoticed and what would we find? We decided to take our chances at dawn, and began our journey from the Netherlands to Belgium at night. As we got closer to our target, our tension increased – what if we couldn’t get in or got caught? We knew it was a prohibited area but we didn’t see ourselves as criminals. After all, we were only going to take photographs. That was how I reassured myself, imagining we were above the law at that moment.

In the distance we saw the blast furnaces. We were getting close. Walking to the complex we kept our eyes peeled in case we were spotted or there was any security in place. We crept along a wall, looking for a way in. Our relief was palpable when we found an

opening. We were now within the walls of the complex, on forbidden territory. The adrenalin was pumping through my body and for a minute or so the last thing I wanted to do was take photographs. To take cover and give us time to get a grip, we slipped into one of the many empty buildings.

During that first hour my camera stayed in my bag. The mysterious atmosphere of this place simply overwhelmed me. There were buildings that had been abandoned for years and tools that had just been left to gather dust. Workers’ overalls still hung on pegs, as if they might return at any moment and start work again. But my photographer’s curiosity soon prevailed and I began to look for beautiful images. From this moment I knew this would become my photographic world.

During my training at the School of Photography I got more and more involved in Urbex and met other Urbex photographers. The number of Urbex websites grew and we looked each other up on forums, organised meetings and shared information. The Urbex photographers from this period were pioneers and kept the scene underground as much as possible. They gave locations Urbex names, which might refer in a small way to the original name, location or activity – or which might be complete nonsense. Anyone who found a new location had the honour of inventing its Urbex name. This hard-core group of photographers enforced an important rule: *Take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints.*

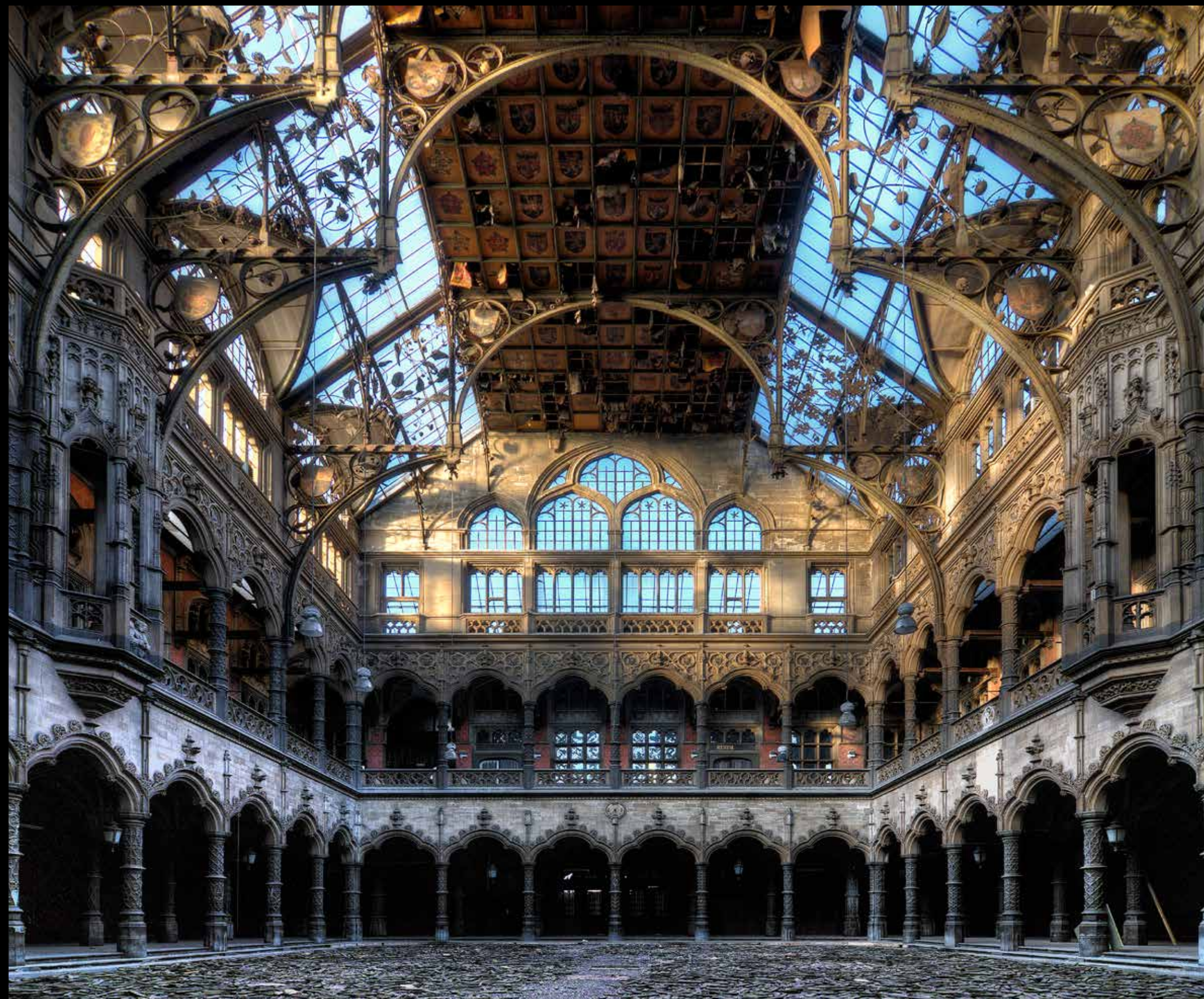
The number of Urbex photographers increased but not every newcomer stuck to the rule. Sites were ransacked, items were stolen and the chances of encountering other photographers in a small abandoned cottage grew. Urbex had been discovered by the masses. With dismay the pioneers saw locations that had been maintained in a perfect state of disrepair for years rapidly overrun by groups of photographers who had no respect for them. Amateurs got to know the addresses of Urbex locations, partly through

social media. This did not go unnoticed by owners, managers and governments, and soon access to abandoned locations was prohibited and made physically impossible. Fences, padlocks, barbed wire and surveillance kept people out. Where previously only vandals, copper thieves and graffiti artists had been seen as a scourge, photographers were now added to the list. Serious Urbex photographers withdrew slowly and went back underground. Beautiful and sensitive locations are now kept secret within this group and only shared with a select few, in order to protect them from harm.

In this book you will find a selection of photographs taken in various European countries between 2009 and 2015. A number of them have been published in the media or shown at exhibitions.

For sales and exhibition information, contact me at wigo@worsseling.nl or visit www.worsseling.nl









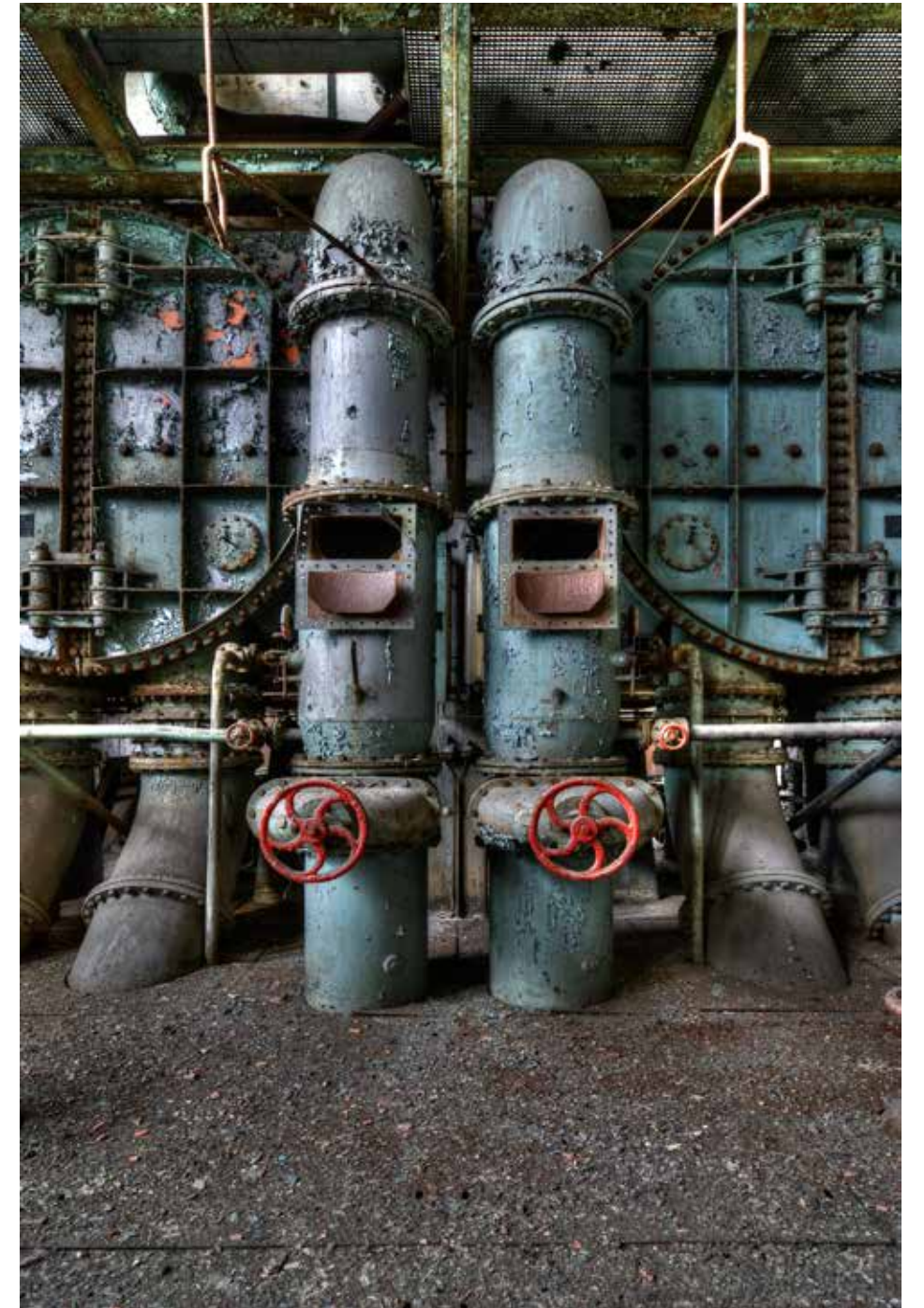
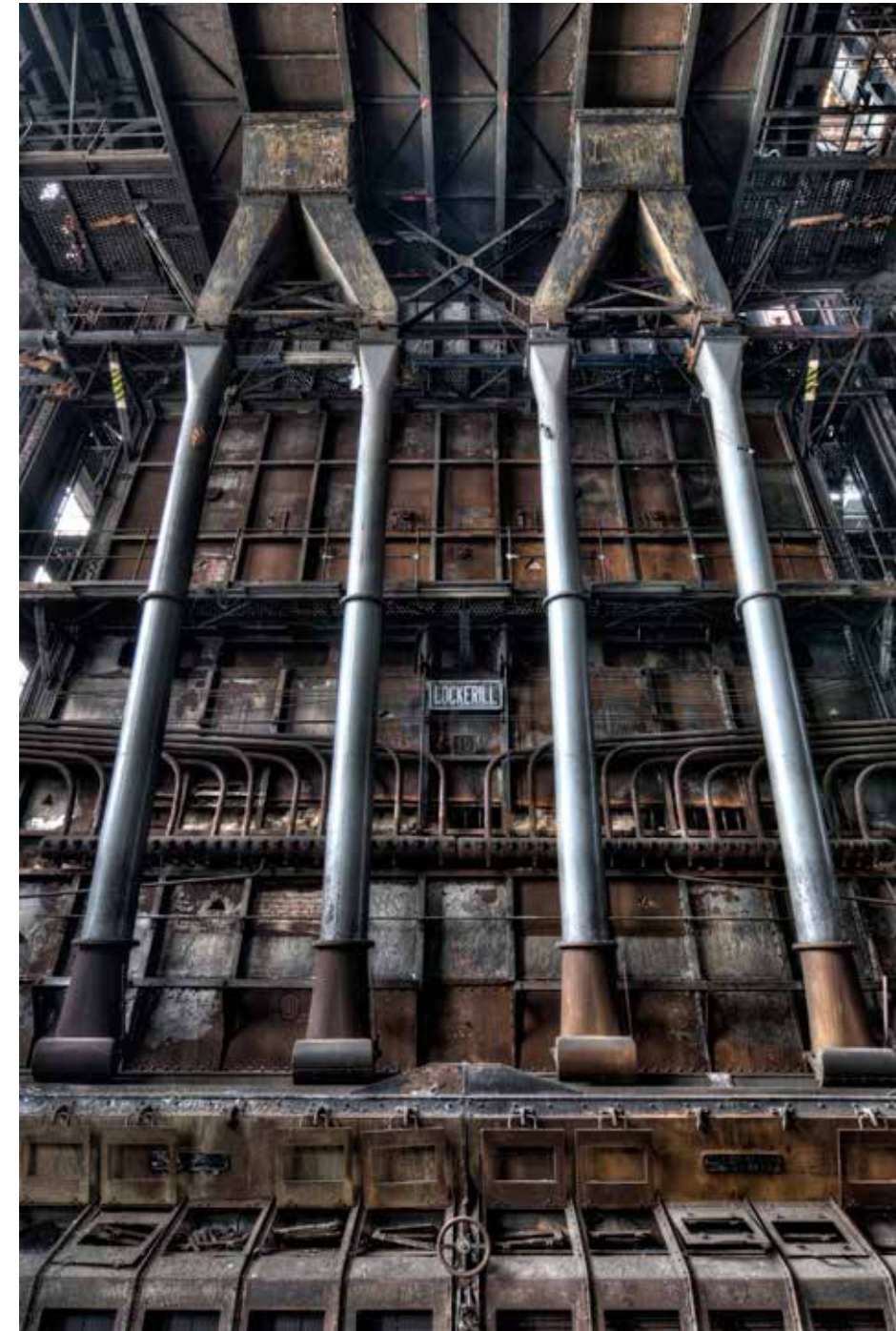








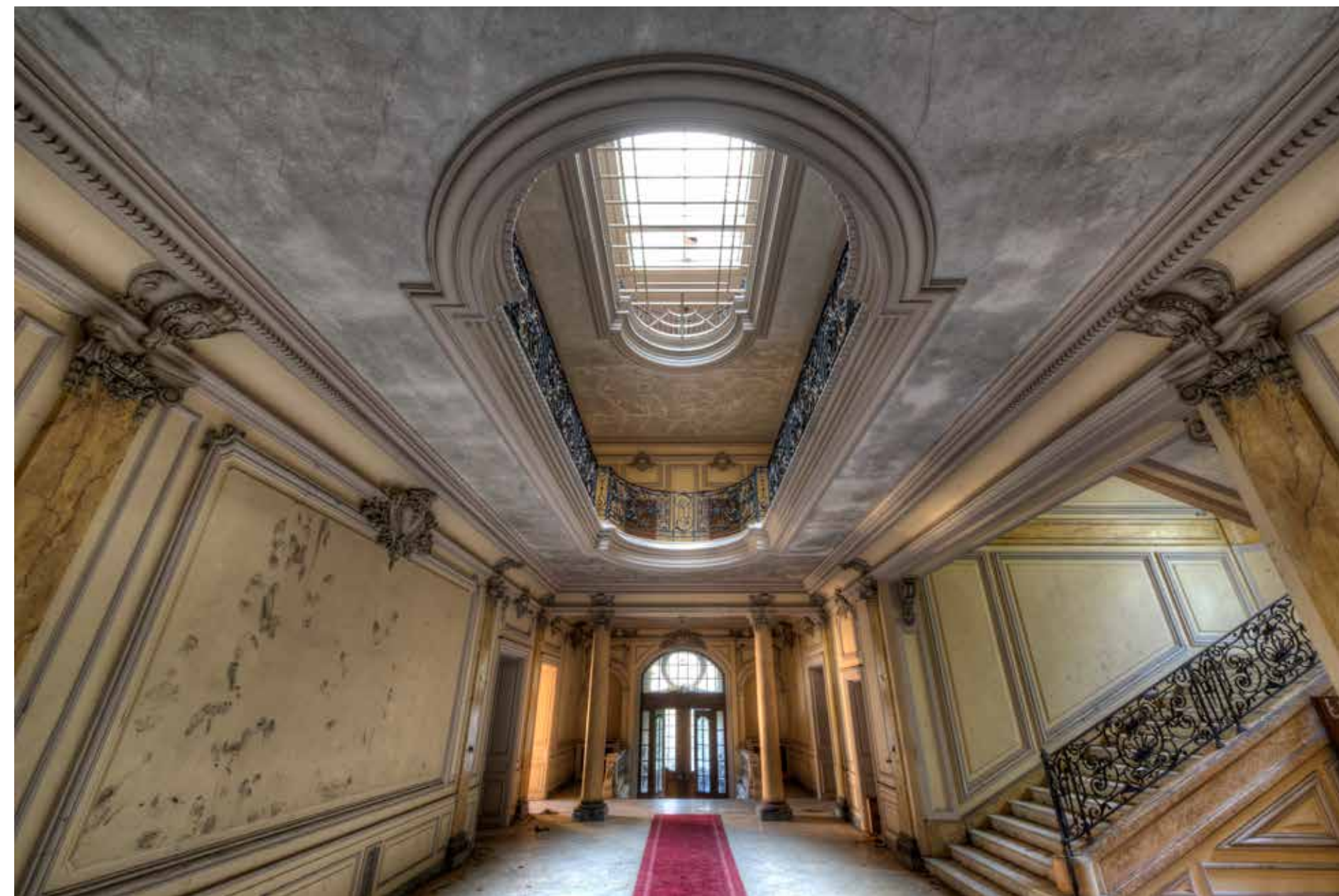




ECVB (Belgium)

It was 5.30 in the morning when the alarm went off and -5°C outside – so thermal underwear was a necessity. We were heading to a large location in Belgium. ECVB was a power plant that had begun operation in 1913, shut down around 1997 and been left to its fate ever since. The plant had once provided electricity for the heavy industry around it. When we arrived at this steel giant, the sun was just rising. In the dawn light we searched for an entrance. After a bit of climbing and scrambling we stood right in front of the plant. It was big – very big. Overpowering, to be honest. A few hundred metres away we heard machines hissing and puffing. That was the part of the plant that was still in use. After checking there were no cameras, we searched for an open door or window. Once inside, the place made our mouths water. We could see everything was still intact – there had been no vandals, there was no graffiti and the copper thieves had left the place alone. The rooms were full of machines. Machines? They were monsters! Turbines

in which you could easily throw a party and miles of tubes that went on endlessly. There was also plenty of rust, perfect for colour photography. One of the buildings, with floors made from grids, was ten storeys and over 80 metres high. From the top floor I could see the ground floor below me; my legs felt wobbly and my mouth was dry. The thought that these old, rusty grids could just collapse at any moment made me very uncomfortable. I seriously wondered what I was doing, but curiosity overcame common sense. Sometimes people ask me why I take such chances. Naturally I am very careful and I assess every situation carefully. If it is really too risky I will not go on, but if I think I can, I will go where other photographers will not. We stayed in this colossus the whole day, but found the time all too short. The setting sun forced us to say goodbye. Perhaps just as well as the low temperatures and effort of getting around took their toll on our creativity. As we left I took a moment to look back. I am sure I will return.







Palace Casino (Italy)

This enormous house was built at the end of the 18th century by a rich duchess. It was sold some 40 years later to the Empress of France, who completely restored it. She created the enormous columns and the *casinetto* at the stairs, which are typical of Italian architecture. As the years went by the house was sold a number of times. The present owner has no current plans for the building and it remains abandoned.

It was a joy to walk through this imposing building, with its beautiful ceilings and painted walls.

